GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
FINANCE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4198
ANSWERED ON:19.04.2002
DIVERSION OF OPIUM
PRABHUNATH SINGH

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned `Farmers fool govt., divert opium to heroin market` appearing in the `Express Newsline` dated March 3, 2002;

(b) whether the Government are aware that opium growing farmers are adulterating opium with dextrine and are disposing-off the rest in the grey market; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the action taken in the matter?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN)

(a) Yes Sir. The Government is aware of the news item in question which appeared in the `Express Newsline` dated 14 March 2002.

(b) & (c) Some cases of adulteration of opium with gum, including dextrine, have been detected. However, no case of diversion of opium in grey market by opium cultivators who have tendered such adulterated opium has been detected. Depending on the extent of adulteration, penalty ranging from 5% to 100% of the payment due has been imposed on the cultivators whose opium has been found to be adulterated. Further, the quantity of opium tendered by them has been proportionately reduced for the computation of the Minimum Qualifying Yield for the purposes of renewal of the licence for the next crop year. Cultivators whose average yield fell below the Minimum Qualifying Yield have been delicensed.

Besides, the Government has taken several steps to check the diversion of opium to the illicit market. These include:

(i) Assessment of the total opium produce through cent per cent measurement of poppy fields of the licensed area. The area measured is further test measured selectively.

(ii) After lancing, preliminary weighment checks are also conducted to account for the entire opium collected by the cultivators from their fields.

(iii) Increased surveillance is done with the help of different Enforcement Agencies at the time of lancing of poppy crop.

(iv) During weighment operation, strict surveillance is maintained and, if suspected to be adulterated, the opium is separately sent to the Government Opium and Alkaloid Factory at Neemuch and Ghazipur for chemical tests.

(v) Various law enforcement agencies like the Narcotics Control Bureau, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Excise and Customs Department, Central Bureau of Narcotics and the State Police have been empowered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 to interdict and apprehend trafficking in drugs in any form, including diversion of opium to illicit channel.